

# Consultation Report for First UMC-Orange

## INTRODUCTION

We, the consultation team, would like to thank Rev. John Warren, the lay leadership and the congregation of First United Methodist Church-Orange for the invitation to consult with your church as part of the Vibrant Church Initiative. The observations and prescriptions in this report are the result of this team studying the following information:

- First UMC-Orange's self-study document provided by its leaders
- interviews with pastor, staff and lay leadership
- a focus group with members of the congregation
- a meeting with the Church Council
- a MissionInsite demographic report of the area's population
- input from the Faith Perceptions "Mystery Guest Worshipper" report
- input from Saturday's leadership workshop

It was a great joy to work with a congregation that openly cooperated with us and provided all the information we requested. The consult team's prayer is that God will use this assessment experience and consultation report so that First United Methodist Church-Orange will more effectively make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of its community and the world.

## STRENGTHS

### Strength #1: Facility and Location

First UMC-Orange is blessed with an impressive facility and multipurpose areas. Located in historic downtown Orange, the church's neighbors include the Stark Art Museum, Lutchter Theater, Orange Public Library, the Chamber of Commerce, and Lamar State College. Clearly, First UMC-Orange is uniquely positioned with possibilities to be a hub for Christian mission, collaboration and life-transforming ministry.

### Strength #2: Passionate Leadership

Holding so much promise and potential, First UMC-Orange has confidence in the devotion of their pastor, staff and lay leaders. The consultation team saw how individuals in the congregation exhibit a willingness to serve and embrace fresh ideas. The congregation seems eager to discover and lead new initiatives for growth.

### Strength #3: Family Feel

First UMC-Orange has cultivated a strong feeling of family within the membership. The consultation team heard from church members that one of the best things about First UMC-Orange is the *people*, who are described as "warm, loving, welcoming, genuine, caring, and supportive."

### Strength #4: Multi-Generational Congregation

First UMC-Orange has demonstrated an openness and desire to include people of all ages. Opportunities exist for all generations to connect and grow in their faith through this church. A congregation that nurtures and affirms people of all ages is one that can create possibilities for a vital future.

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## Strength #5: Hope & Readiness to Move Forward

The Spirit of God is moving in this place! The consultation team observed the people of First UMC-Orange affirming their trust in what God is up to and their excitement to be a part of it. When asked about trying new things, we heard enthusiastically, “We want to be known in this community.”

## CONCERNS

### Concern #1: Underutilized Space and Newcomer Hospitality

The overall facilities of the church have received a lot of attention and upgrades, including the versatile new addition and an attractive welcome area inside the education building. However, there are some missed opportunities to maximize the potential of the entire church campus. Based on the experiences of Mystery Guests, there are limitations that need to be addressed in order to be more intentional and hospitable to newcomers. One Mystery Guest observed, “A new person like myself would have trouble navigating the church.” With a real can-do attitude, current church members have already identified “easy fixes” throughout the church that could also increase ministry opportunities.

### Concern #2: Challenges in Leadership and Structure

First UMC-Orange has a pastor, staff and lay leaders who are talented and committed, but are at risk of burn-out, and they lack resources for leadership development. The church has not administered a clear system to identify, recruit, train, and mentor new leaders. Also, ministry is bogged down by burdensome committee meetings. Pastor, staff, and lay leadership need to empower the whole church to do ministry together. The current organization of staff responsibilities and committee work hinders the goal-setting, accountability, and evaluation that would otherwise enable ministries to flourish. Without addressing these issues, the church will not be positioned for the future or maximize staff effectiveness potential.

### Concern #3: Communication Issues

Throughout the consultation, the team continually heard feedback about the need for clear and consistent communication around ministry events, issues, and decisions across multiple communication channels. Guest follow-up can be spotty. Newsletter, e-mail, social media, and text messages have been intermittently successful in communicating vital information to the church body but there is room for improvement. Creative communication that connects with the community beyond these walls is an even greater challenge. Additionally, more attention needs to be paid to the design, content, and ongoing maintenance of the church website.

### Concern #4: Inconsistent Worship Experience & Faith Formation

The comments of the Mystery Guests and current members indicate that there is a lack of consistency in the quality and content of worship, even within the individual worship services on a Sunday-by-Sunday basis. Church members specifically expressed concern over music leadership in the 9 am service because it is under-resourced. In the area of faith formation, more intentionality is needed to connect people of all ages with Sunday School, small groups, micro-groups, and programming like Wednesday Night Live in order to develop new and maturing disciples of Jesus Christ. Church-wide opportunities to encourage multi-generational fellowship need to be created.

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## Concern #5: Lack of Bridges to Community

First UMC-Orange genuinely wants to invite and share their faith with others and look more outward than inward. However, there appears to be no process of intentionally connecting with people in the area who have no church home. According to the MissionInsite report, people in the Orange community are looking for opportunities for personal growth, support groups, family and children services, advocacy for social justice, and community and cultural programs.

## PRESCRIPTIONS:

On the date these prescriptions are adopted, First United Methodist Church-Orange will adopt the mission statement of The United Methodist Church: *“To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.”*

The congregation will have a Day of Prayer and Renewal that will allow the membership to be fully prepared for God’s vision for the future. This day will be led by a person to be selected by the Texas Annual Conference and will be conducted on or before Sunday, September 18, 2016.

There will be a Day of Visioning workshop on or before Sunday, September 25, 2016 to dream of how God wants to work through this congregation, both individually and collectively, to be in ministry with the community. The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will select a Vision Task Force of 5–7 people (including at least one person under the age of 35 and at least one member of the Youth Council) to refine a vision statement for the church based on the collective input from the workshop attendees. This task will be completed by January 30, 2017. The vision will be presented to the Administrative Board for affirmation within 30 days. The new vision will then be communicated to the congregation in multiple formats immediately and with repetition.

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will select a team of 3–5 people, on or before March 10, 2017, to conduct a Ministry, Program, and Activity Review to help align all of the programs and activities to the mission and vision of the church. Every ministry, program, and activity in the congregation must demonstrate how it will accomplish the mission and vision, and any new ministry, program, or activity will have as its primary purpose the “making of disciples.” This review will begin on or before April 1, 2017, and will be completed on or before June 30, 2017. Any ministry, program, or activity not in alignment with the new mission and vision will be given 6 months to demonstrate its ability and commitment to align. After that time, any ministry, program, or activity not in alignment will be discontinued.

## Prescription #1: Improve Utilization of Space and Hospitality Efforts

(1) The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will develop a Community Liaison Team of 3–5 people to meet for the first time on Monday, September 26, 2016, with the goal of connecting with several local organizations to explore ways for the church’s spaces to be made available for community opportunities. The team will make their recommendations on possible opportunities to the Administrative Board by February 28, 2017. The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will create a plan to move forward with the assistance of the team. This plan will be communicated to the congregation to invite their input, and further project implementation will be developed by the team on or before March 30, 2017.

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(2) The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will develop a short-term Hospitality Team of 3–5 people (with at least one person who has joined the church in the last year) by September 10, 2016 to analyze interior and exterior signage, visitor parking, and other hospitality considerations—all from a guest’s perspective. The Hospitality Team will:

- Take a tour of 3 churches in the area to familiarize themselves with best signage practices and hospitable spaces. Next, contact 3 sign companies to have them walk the campus of First UMC-Orange and give suggestions and estimates for updating signage. Improved signage will make it easy for a guest to find restrooms, children’s area, worship venues and other frequently used spaces without asking for assistance. Upon selection of recommended vendor, develop a plan for implementing professional, directional signage on or before January 31, 2017 and present the plan to the Trustees for approval on or before February 7, 2017. Implementation may be done in phases, consistent with available funding.
- Review campus for possibilities to enhance first impressions, as well as evaluating and imagining childcare possibilities. Develop a plan of implementation on or before January 31, 2017.

### **Prescription #2: Assess Leadership and Restructure to Single-Board Model**

SPRC will review the job descriptions of current staff to ensure alignment with the church’s mission and vision. Adjustments to the job descriptions will be made as needed and reviewed annually.

SPRC, in conjunction with Pastor and the Coach, will appoint a 3–5 person Accountable Leadership Team who will read and discuss the book, *Winning on Purpose* by John Edmund Kaiser, leading this team toward the Single-Board Model of leadership as denoted in Paragraphs 243 and 247.2 of the 2012 *Book of Discipline*. The Coach will conduct a workshop on the new simplified structure for the staff and lay leadership of First UMC-Orange on or before November 1, 2016. This workshop will include information about training for the new board on the structure, accountable leadership, and strategic ministry planning. The Accountable Leadership Team will develop a Single-Board Model proposal for approval by the Administrative Board prior to 2016 Charge Conference.

Provided the proposal is accepted, the Nominations/Lay Leadership Team will work with the Pastor to nominate the members of the new simplified structure. New officers will be presented and elected at this Charge Conference with an effective date of January 1, 2017. Upon adoption of the simplified structure, any affected committees, with the exception of the Nominations/Lay Leadership Team, will be discontinued once the simplified structure goes into effect.

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, and in coordination with the Nominations/Lay Leadership Team will develop a process on or before Charge Conference 2017 to equip and empower current leaders as well as identify and equip future leaders of the church with special attention given to matching an individual’s gifts with their leadership role. The Nominations/Lay Leadership Team is charged with implementing the process on an ongoing basis.

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## Prescription #3: Refine Strategies for Communication

The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will select a Communication Team of 5–7 people (with at least one with experience in marketing / communication) by September 10, 2016. This team will:

- Read and discuss *The Social Media Why* by Crystal Washington on or before November 1, 2016.
- Schedule a communication workshop for the team with April Canik from the Conference office on or before March 30, 2017 to determine best practices and formulate a plan for overall church communication with internal and external audiences.
- Review guest follow-up procedures and make recommendations for an improved process, using two resources for reference: *Fusion* by Nelson Searcy and *Get Their Name: How to Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships* by Bob Farr. Upon approval of the Pastor, begin to implement the improved process on or before January 31, 2017.
- Refresh church website to improve navigation and organization, showcasing more photos, sharing stories of life transformation, fixing broken links, and providing targeted and robust information with newcomers in mind. These tasks should be completed by November 30, 2016. To ensure that all date-sensitive content is current, the website should be reviewed and maintained by a designated person from the Communication Team on a weekly basis.

## Prescription #4: Strive Toward Excellence in Worship and Faith Formation for All

(1) The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will establish a Worship Excellence Team of 5–7 non-staff individuals representing all three worship experiences on or before September 10, 2016.

Serving for a maximum two-year term, this team will include at least two people who are under the age of 35 and one representative from the Youth Council.

This team will:

- Begin to read and discuss *Redesigning Worship* by Kim Miller and *Taking Flight With Creativity* by Len Wilson and Jason Moore by September 15, 2016.
- Host a church-wide worship workshop led by Dr. Craig Gilbert, or his designee, on or before October 31, 2016.
- Develop and present a plan that includes how to meet worship staffing and resources needed to the appropriate board or committee on or before January 30, 2017.
- Based upon best practices presented in the workshop and in the books, evaluate present worship experiences to assess their effectiveness as meaningful and relevant worship for the church and unchurched. This will be completed no later than January 30, 2017. This team will examine the use of multimedia, music, equipment, and optimizing worship spaces and worship times.
- Implement strategies to create consistent quality, meaningful worship experiences no later than January 30, 2017 and review these strategies monthly.

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(2) The Pastor, in consultation with the Coach, will work with the Education Council, Youth Director, and additional nominees to evaluate current disciple-making opportunities.

This team will:

- Create opportunities to share God stories (in-person, written, or pre-recorded) with the congregation on a consistent and regular basis, beginning on or before October 10, 2016.
- Read and discuss *Move* by Greg Hawkins on or before March 10, 2017.
- Review discipleship workshop available from the Ascending Leaders organization and determine its merit to be presented as an additional resource.
- Develop pathways to spiritual growth in children, youth, and adults. These pathways will be designed for everyone—including non-believers, those maturing in their faith, and everyone in between. They will represent a lifelong process that encourages all persons to worship, grow, and serve in their relationship with God through Jesus Christ and provide connection opportunities with other believers for support and accountability. These pathways must be created and presented to the congregation by September 10, 2017.

### Prescription #5: Improve Relational Bridge-Building

In consultation with the Coach, the Pastor will appoint a 5–7 person Community Connection Team to lead and facilitate the building of bridges to the community. Prior to its first meeting, the Community Connection Team will read *Get Their Name: How to Grow Your Church by Building New Relationships* by Bob Farr. This team will have its first meeting on or before September 30, 2016 to discuss ideas from the book and begin to lay out the following activities of the church for 2017:

- Research and act upon the needs of the people in the local community and gaps in services through interviews with local officials, chief of police, fire chief, council members, local public health department, school principals and other local churches – using, as a foundation, the community study provided to the VCI Team – by November 30, 2016.
- Conduct two community events (at no charge to the public and not specifically for our members) to reach new people, build relationships, and invite them to worship. To be completed, one in the spring of 2017 and one in the fall of 2017, with at least one of these two events being held outside the church campus.
- Conduct two events to go out into the community to serve others and visibly share God’s love. To be completed anytime in the 2017 calendar year.
- The intention is for the entire church to be involved (in some form or fashion) in all of these events. The team will plan, facilitate and evaluate these events and then will continue and/or adjust them for the coming years based on their fruitfulness. The team will also delegate a process for guest follow-up immediately after these special events.

Before any of the bridge-building events are launched, the Community Connection Team, in consultation with the Coach, will determine the best strategies to promote the planned events to the entire church to keep them informed and engaged.

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## CONCLUSION

We, the consultation team, want to thank you for the opportunity to serve your congregation in this manner. Our prayer for your congregation is that God will use this process to help you implement your mission more effectively, utilize your compelling vision through a developed plan, and thereby make an eternal difference in the First UMC-Orange community for the glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Seaborn Nesbett, Lead Consultant  
Rev. Marilyn Wadkins, Coach  
Kelsey Johnson, Scribe

### **Town Hall Meeting Dates:**

*Sunday, August 7, 4-5 pm, in the Praise Center*

*Wednesday, August 17, 6-7 pm, in the Chapel*

*Sunday, August 21, 4-5 pm, in the Praise Center*

### **Church Conference Date:**

*Sunday, August 28, at noon, in the Praise Center*